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COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1](#)1. Anniversary of President ObamaQs Swearing-In
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Aftermath of the Earthquake in Haiti

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Key stories in the media:  
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Israel Radio reported that U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace

Senator George Mitchell will visit Damascus today before coming to Israel this evening. The Jerusalem Post reported that the PA is pushing Israel to agree to a total construction freeze in both the settlements and East Jerusalem of between three and six months. The newspaper quoted senior Israeli officials as saying that PM Benjamin Netanyahu will not agree to this offer. (Maariv printed a similar story.) The Jerusalem Post reported that this is one of the ideas that Mitchell is expected to raise during his meeting with Netanyahu tomorrow.

Major media reported that Iran has rejected an international plan that called for shipping most of its low-enriched uranium abroad for further enrichment as part of an effort to prevent the building of a nuclear weapon. Media cited U.S. administration officials as saying that this was an inadequate response. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe and other media quoted the head of IDF Intelligence, Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin, as saying that Iran is advancing every day toward nuclear capability.

Yediot quoted former U.S. President Bill Clinton, the U.N. Special Envoy to Haiti, as saying that Israelis have accumulated a lot of experience on the battlefield and that they have wonderful field hospitals. Clinton thanked them for this. He was quoted as saying that the Israelis do excellent work. Israel Radio reported that other U.N. officials praised Israel's medical work.

Yediot reported that the Knesset is launching a campaign to put Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on trial in The Hague for violating the U.N. Charter's genocide clause. Maariv cited the IDF's belief that some of the weapons seized aboard the ship Francop were sent by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to Ahmadinejad.

Yediot cited suspicions in Israel that representatives of international organizations and diplomats have transferred large sums of money to Gaza through the Erez Crossing.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Fatah officials as saying yesterday that PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's government has been working to weaken Fatah by drying up its financial resources and isolating it in the political and security fields.

The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli defense officials as saying yesterday that the Pentagon is rebuffing Israel's technical demands on the F-35 aircraft.

The media reported that, following the victory of Republican candidate Scott Brown in the special Massachusetts election to replace Ted Kennedy in the U.S. Senate, President Obama has lost his majority in the Senate. U.S. politics expert Professor Avraham Ben-Zvi told Israel Radio that this development represents disappointment in a national referendum for Obama. Media said that Obama is facing various tests after one year in office. Speaking on Israel Radio today, Yediot's Washington correspondent rated the President's performance an 8 out of 10.

The Jerusalem Post reported that prominent Palestinian journalists visited the Knesset yesterday.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Shin Bet has beefed up security for officials traveling overseas because of concern that Hizbullah will target one of them to avenge the assassination of its terror chief Imad Mughniyah in Damascus two years ago.

Yediot reported on a row between Israel and Jordan regarding the placing of a stone from the Temple Mount on the Knesset esplanade. Jordan claims that the artifact was taken from a palace of the Abbasid period, while Israel says it is from the Second Temple period.

Yediot reported that Israel and Turkey have signed a cooperation agreement in many domains aimed at returning bilateral relations to their normal course. The Jerusalem Post quoted IDF Intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Amos Yadlin as saying that Turkey is moving away from the West.

Media reported that a report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that if the OECD accepts Israel in its vote this May, it will be its poorest member with the widest social gaps. The OECD's chairman, Jose Angel Gurría,

submitted the report to the Israeli Government yesterday. Makor Rishon-Hatzofe quoted Netanyahu as saying that Israel will join the organization by the end of this year.

Leading media reported that the FBI has arrested 19 suspects, including three Israelis who own security firms, on charges of attempted bribing of the defense minister of an African country.

Citing the AP, The Jerusalem Post mentioned a document released by the Vatican yesterday, which blames the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the QoccupyingQ of lands for fomenting most of the conflicts in the Middle East, driving Christians out and making life difficult for those who remain.

Over the past week the media reported on the aftermath of a complaint filed in court by a former employee of the PMQs wife Sara at the Netanyahu residence in Caesarea, who accused her of bad treatment and low remuneration. On Friday Yediot revealed the alleged affair, which many view as the reflection of a row between IsraelQs largest newspaper and Israel Hayom, a free daily with a growing circulation that is owned by American Jewish tycoon Sheldon Adelson, a friend of Benjamin Netanyahu.

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11. Anniversary of President ObamaQs Swearing-In:  
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Block Quotes:  
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1I. QFor a Stronger Year Two

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (1/20): QOne year later, the great expectations that Obama set for himself in this sphere, and that others placed in him, lie largely unfulfilled. America has not defeated terror in Iraq, Afghanistan, or even in its own airspace.... Obama's diplomatic approach to preventing Iran's nuclearization has borne no fruit; his delays in applying sufficiently biting sanctions risk giving the Iranian leadership the impression that it won't be held accountable.... Obama admirably sought a new way forward in his relations with the Muslim world, which he elucidated in his June 4 speech in Cairo. The response to date has been a cold shoulder, including the rejection of the positive gestures he sought from Arab leaders to give Israelis hope of reciprocity in the peace process.... Meanwhile, Obama's call for a halt to all Israeli building beyond the 1967 lines -- a demand no Israeli prime minister could meet in full -- needlessly radicalized the Palestinian leadership, for how could Mahmoud Abbas consent to resumed talks with Israel when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was not even doing what his American allies required him to do? That pressure to halt building even in east Jerusalem and the major settlement blocs also reduced the President's credibility among Israelis.... This is our hope: ... a strong Israel requires a strong America that is respected by the world. That was prominent among the expectations Americans and Israelis harbored on that wintry day in Washington a year ago. And that is what they need still more urgently in President Obama's second year.

II. "Lonely at the Top"

Columnist and former Washington correspondent Tal Schneider wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (1/20): QIn poll-loving America ... Obama started his term with support rates of over 90 percent. How is it possible that -- according to a Washington Post poll -- the President earns the support of only 54 percent of respondents. In the parallel, i.e. the real, world, the American people will decide whether to support or not a president based on a survey of economic performance.... This is how the President will be judged over the coming year. In November the mid-term elections ... will be held. One will then be able to see how Obama is truly perceived among the public that raised him to greatness.

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12. Mideast:  
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Block Quotes:  
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1. Before Netanyahu Pops the Champagne  
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Palestinian affairs correspondent Avi Issacharoff wrote in the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (1/20): QThe Americans are coming. The U.S. National Security Advisor, Jim Jones, visited Israel last week and Mideast Envoy George Mitchell landed in the country yesterday [sic]. But without a dramatic change in both Washington's and Jerusalem's positions, talks on a final-status agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority will not be relaunched even after Mitchell leaves.... Israeli officials will naturally celebrate the significant QachievementQ of the non-renewal of negotiations and deepening relations with Washington, while [Mahmoud] Abbas will be viewed as a spoilsport, refusing every Israeli or American proposal. Netanyahu will be able to sell his colleagues in the Labor Party -- and domestic public opinion -- the claim that he is at least trying. After all, who cares if there is no diplomatic horizon if the West Bank is quiet? But without a final-status agreement, this quiet will ultimately be revealed as more fragile than it seems. Before the champagne is popped in the offices of the prime, foreign, and defense ministers, let's remember that the absence of diplomatic prospects hardly represents a foreign policy achievement. Perhaps the time has come for Netanyahu to simply tell the Israeli public the truth: there will be no peace agreement with the PA without Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, that building there does not help reach such an agreement, and that maybe we need a building freeze, even a short one, to save the moribund peace process from an untimely death.

II. QSitting on Embers

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (1/20): QIsraelQs condition has seemingly never been so good: the shops are full to the brim, cafes fight over empty tables, wages are rising.... Terror -- more dangerous than that of bombs -- is that of world delegitimization, of IsraelQs exclusion from the world nations... Over the past period the Arabs and Palestinians have been disappointing us.... We should do everything we can to revive the talks and bring the Palestinians to the negotiating table. Looking at what has happened so far, the Israelis fell asleep on the watch near that table, too.

III. QTime Is Running Out

Liberal columnist Dr. Gadi Taub wrote in Yediot Aharonot (1/20): QThis option has a time limit and time is running out. Israel was given six months [to launch an independent investigation into Operation Cast Lead] from the publication of the Goldstone report, and this period will end on March 15. The accusations of Judge Goldstone appear to be mostly groundless. GoldstoneQs method, in which clearly biased testimonies were accepted without question or further examination, is not only unfair, but absolutely scandalous.... Israel erred by choosing to boycott the commission. But its choice not to honor the terms of the international community and to launch its own investigation by an independent agency is much more severe. Such an agency could be a commission headed by a judge, or an inquiry by the State ComptrollerQs Office.... Why ... has no investigation been launched? Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi and Defense Minister Ehud Barak continue to oppose it. They wish to maintain the chain of command and the accountability of the officers towards their commanders, not towards an external tribunal.... But what the Chief of Staff and Defense Minister believe to be protecting their subordinates is actually forsaking them.... If war crimes were committed in Operation Cast Lead, we have a right to know about them, and their perpetrators should stand trial here in Israel. But it is no less important that we not leave this manipulative report unanswered, and leave those who were sent to defend our security exposed to prosecution and imprisonment. If the IDF is proud of the fact that it does not forsake its soldiers in the hands of the enemy, it should understand that we have enemies

of a new kind, and they are damaging our ability to defend ourselves.

#### IV. QGoogleQs Tough Censorship Talk Bypasses Arab Countries

Digital affairs writer David Shamah commented in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (1/20): QGoogle talks tough when it comes to ChinaQs blocking human rights on the Internet -- but is it planning to do anything about net censorship and netizen rights in the Arab world?.... I certainly do not approve of ChinaQs policies on human rights.... I bring the above by way of contrast to the Internet policies of countries like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and even Jordan. Google not only does not protest the censorship and invasive net practices of Arab governments -- it even cooperates with them. And not only has there been no criticism of these policies by Google, there has been no hint from the company that it intends to close down its offices anywhere in the Arab world ever.... Even countries that regards themselves as QwesternizedQ to some extent, like the UAE, Kuwait, and of course that bastion of democracy, Egypt, keep tabs on users and sites, sniffing out QinappropriateQ use of the Internet. Bloggers who dare to write something that their government disapproves of are likely to find themselves in jail or worse.... Even China recanted its brief ban on YouTube last year. Why close offices in China, but not the Arab lands? If youQre going to take a stand on Internet censorship, isnQt it discriminatory -- even racist -- to come down hard on one set of abusers, while letting another group of abusers off the hook altogether?

#### 13. Aftermath of the Earthquake in Haiti:

##### Block Quotes:

##### QNow They Love Us

Eytan Haber, veteran op-ed writer and assistant to the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, opined on page one of the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (1/20): QThe IDF delegation that is giving its heart and soul in order to save lives in Haiti illustrates in its laudable work the Israeli tragedy: within a month or two, no one will remember the good deeds of the IDF soldiers, the quick rescue work at the far end of the world, and the countries and leaders who are now praising Israel will give instructions to vote against it in the U.N., condemn the IDF operations in Gaza, and once again criticize the Israeli foreign minister. Israel, which is now rescuing children from the inferno, will return to being the bad boy of the world. These difficult days in Haiti are also days filled with pride for Israel.... Soon, the soldiers of the delegation will return to their homes. In their albums they will have pictures for a keepsake. As for us, we will return to fighting in a world that does not like to see us in our fine hours. What a pity.

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